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Public health student named 2021 Outstanding Undergraduate Major of the Year by national honor society

June 4, 2021



A 2021 Outstanding Undergraduate Major of the Year Award from Eta Sigma Gamma (ESG), a national honorary society for the profession of health education, is evidence of the hard work and growth that Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) senior Ife Kayode has experienced during her time at Georgia Southern University.

In collaboration with the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC), the honor is given to outstanding students who exemplify the highest ideals of the health education profession.

“An honor like this is significant to me in terms of my personal, professional and academic development,” said Kayode. “It is an honor to see that my personal character aligns with one that is deserving of this achievement. It has also enabled me to acknowledge that my academic, professional and

extracurricular involvement at Georgia Southern and its community have not gone unnoticed. I feel blessed, thankful and very appreciative to have earned such an award.”

Kayode matriculated at the University on a biology track, but after taking a public health course, she switched majors and dove into the public health community so she could better understand different areas within the discipline prior to graduation. This led her to the University’s campus chapter of ESG, where she currently serves as president.

To be considered for the ESG/NCHEC Outstanding Undergraduate Major of the Year Award the student must be nominated by a faculty member.

“Ife has been a member of the Gamma Upsilon chapter here since 2019,” said ESG advisor and nominating faculty member Joanne Chopak-Foss, Ph.D. “She became president of the chapter for the 2020-21 academic year, which was especially challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ife has not missed a beat serving as president. She conducts herself with grace and intelligence and is well liked by all. We are so proud that she was selected as one of the Outstanding Undergraduate Majors of the Year.”

Kayode also conducts research with Tilicia Mayo-Gamble, Ph.D., working on public health policy and communication projects for sickle cell disease.

“It was unsurprising that Ife was selected for this award,” said Mayo-Gamble. “She has sought opportunities that will set her apart as Ife advances her public health career. Ife conducted research with me through the undergraduate research funding. She conducted a systematic review on social determinants of health associated with medication adherence in patients with sickle cell disease. Her diligence and tenacity led to a successful oral presentation in the Georgia Southern Research Symposium. Ife is a prime example of the success we hope each public health student is able to achieve.”

Kayode's professors deeply impacted her experience as an undergraduate research student.

"Through their advisement and mentorship, I have been able to immerse myself into the study of public health in the most profound, efficacious and impactful ways I can as an undergraduate student," said Kayode. "As a public health research assistant under Dr. Mayo-Gamble, I have learned new knowledge and skills and gained many new experiences under her mentorship. I am thankful for the research opportunities provided by Georgia Southern as this has been one of my favorite involvements as a student. As a professor and advisor for Eta Sigma Gamma, Dr. Chopak-Foss has taught me a plethora about professionalism in public health and the many ways I can make my own personal impact in the field and community around me." Kayode also recently published a paper, "[Perceived Discrimination and Racism on the Treatment and Medication Adherence of Hypertension in African Americans](#)," with Logan Cowan, Ph.D., associate professor of epidemiology, in JPHCOPH's series, "Eagles Talking About the Public's Health."

After graduation in December, Kayode will pursue a graduate degree and aims to combine her interests in public health and law for a career in public health policy or pharmaceutical law.

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